year to implement JFM Scheme and how effective is the policy;

(c) whether the area of the forest in Assam in drastically reducing, instead of increasing, due to lack of effective policy; and

(d) if so, the details of action plan in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU); (a) Yes Sir, As per the provisions of National Forest Policy, 1988, Joint Forest Management (JFM) programme is being implemented all over the Country in order to involve people living in and around forest areas.

(b) During the current financial year 2002-03, an amount of Rs. 5.00 lakh has been sanctioned for the involvement of JFM Committees in forest fire prevention and control, under Integrated Forest Protection Scheme. Out of this amount, Rs. 2.50 lakh has been released as first installment to the Assam Government during the current year.

(c) and (d) No Sir. As per the assessment of Forest Survey of India (FSI) in 1999, there has been a net increase of 136 sq. km. of forest cover as compared to previous assessment in Assam. The Ministry of Environment & Forests has requested the State Government to initiate steps for creation of the Forest Development Agency (FDA) for regenerating the forests with the help of the local people under the JFM mechanism. The State Government have further been requested to strengthen the forest protection mechanism. In this regard, the Ministry of Environment & Forests has also earmarked an outlay of Rs. 445 Crore for the Integrated Forest Protection Scheme during Xth Plan for the entire country including Assam.

Unauthorised Constructions Near Wild Life Sanctuaries

1103. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many unauthorised buildings and residential colonies have come up around the wild life sanctuaries and parks, causing danger to lives, both of wild animals and human beings, living around;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken to remove unauthorised structures and to provide their habitants safer places to live?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRl T.R. BAALU); (a) to (c) There are no reports of unauthorized buildings and residential colonies on forest land in the immediate vicinity of National Parks and Sanctuaries. However, instances of damage caused by wild animals to human beings and vice versa, have come to the notice of the Central Government While damage caused to wild animals is dealt with in accordance with the provisions of Wild Life (Protection) Act. 1972, there is provision . of payment of ex-gratia in case of human death and compensation for injury suffered by human beings.

Vacant Posts in the Forest Department

1104. SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of front line posts in the Department of Forest are lying in various States;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the lack of adequate strength of forest guards causes the large scale encroachment on forest land and increases poaching;

(d) if so, whether Government have initiated steps to lift the present ban on recruitments in this sector;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The State-wise information is being collected and vvill be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) to (f) Lack of required man power does have adverse impacts on protection of forests and wildlife including the prevention of poaching, encroachment etc. The problems have become more acute due to ban on recruitments imposed by various State Governments. Therefore, the Central Government has already urged all the State Governments to fill the vacancies of front line field staff by delegating powers for making appointments to **the** officials of the Wildlife Wing.

Division to Study Endangered Species

1105 .SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state: